

PROFILES IN PEACEBUILDING

ALUMNI STORIES OF GLOBAL IMPACT





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With gratitude,

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Emmanuel Bombande

Ghana // MA 2002

I work for the United Nations Department of Political Affairs. As part of the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisors, I provide mediation support specifically in facilitation and design of dialogue and mediation processes. Most of my work is directly in support of UN missions and UN partner organisations such as regional Intergovernmental organisations. My current deployment is to the Central African Republic (CAR). A massive country blessed with enormous natural resources, CAR has been in a tediously protracted violent conflict for decades. From 2013, renewed escalation with the removal of the government exacerbated the conflict, deepening a divide along religious lines and leading to a proliferation of armed groups. My work involves supporting the efforts of the United Nations Mission (MINUSCA) in local peace processes across the country as well as an African Union-led initiative supported by the UN to convene and facilitate dialogue between the government of CAR and 14 armed groups at the national level in 2018.

More than just providing expertise, I am driven with passion at this point to contribute towards Central Africans becoming their own best peacebuilders and second, appreciating a vision of peace which will bring with it the promise of well-being and prosperity. My previous experiences

in the founding and leadership of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and serving in government underscore the importance of ownership and leadership by people affected by conflict.

In a way, CJP chose me for graduate education. Professors John Paul Lederach and Hizkias Assefa, two key mentors prior to coming to CJP, encouraged and motivated me to see my potential contribution to peace in Africa. I have since not looked back. The classrooms at CJP were more than spaces for learning. CJP challenged me to pay careful attention to the integrity

I must bring to any peacebuilding effort. This, in turn, informed my capacity for knowledge and practice to engage with others at the deeper human levels of building peace.

One of CJP's educational pillars is that theory does not exist in a vacuum – theory must be practiced in recognition of the multiple complexities of conflicts on the ground. There is no one-size-fits all approach.

In the face of personal adversity, I have looked beyond the immediate and found strength to cope by keeping steady and looking at the

bigger picture and beautiful future of possibilities. CJP provided the initial critical network of practitioners that has ever since expanded. It provided the grounding for pursuing a career as a calling rather than merely an employment avenue. CJP also shaped my professional pursuit of ownership and leadership in peacebuilding processes in West Africa with direct support for the founding of WANEP. I appreciate now more than before that in all circumstances and challenges, we must strive to build relationships, as relationships are a necessary foundation for any endeavor to promote human dignity.



EMMANUEL BOMBANDE // GHANA



MICHAEL BISCHOFF // UNITED STATES

Michael Bischoff

United States // MA 2002

What I learned at CJP didn't just lead me into the professional places I expected, but has been healing for me in many personal, unexpected ways too.

I came to CJP in 2000, after being the executive director of a peace center in Minnesota. I needed to step back learn about the broader patterns that lead to

peace at all levels. I was too lost in the grind of raising money and managing programs. I wanted a more powerful vision, motivation, and network of peacebuilding. CJP delivered all that and much more.

After two relaxing and inspiring years in Harrisonburg, my wife and I came back to Minnesota with a new baby, many friends, expanded skills, and new frameworks that drove my work. I used what I had learned to start a consulting business, which worked with many different nonprofit and government organizations. I mediated conflicts, facil-

itated visioning, and built community coalitions. While at CJP, I did a church conflict consulting project with CJP professor Ron Kraybill. That experience boosted my confidence and approaches enough to do similar consulting on my own and with new partners.

While at CJP, I co-taught undergraduate classes with CJP professors, and those experiences propelled me to lead a wide range of trainings in conflict transformation and social innovation back in Minnesota. My consulting business eventually evolved to facilitate long-term cross-sector collaboration to solve

EVEN BRAIN CANCER HAS LED ME BACK TO THE HEALING PRACTICES I LEARNED AT CJP.

social challenges, from building strong local food systems to increasing access to mental health treatment for new mothers. I was working with dozens of amazing colleagues, and thousands of people were involved in our sessions.

In 2015, when my work was hitting its most powerful stride, I was diagnosed with aggressive brain cancer. I immediately stopped all of my work to undergo a series of surgeries and other treatments. A few months later, after noticing I was still alive, I stumbled upon my most satisfying application of processes and principles from CJP. I began facilitating storytelling about illness and healing with other patients and doctors. I am applying restorative practice, facilitation, and trauma healing, in service of healing for myself and others.

I have been feeling great for more than a year, and helping to lead a national expansion of the healing story work I'm doing with the organization Health Story Collaborative. Our goal is that everyone with a serious illness, and their care providers, has the support they need to tell and listen to stories in ways that are healing, empowering, and connecting. Even brain cancer has led me back to the healing practices I learned at CJP.

Jennifer Jag Jivan

Pakistan // MA 2006

I am director of the Christian Study Centre (CSC) in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. CSC was established 50 years ago with the specific aim to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue and understanding, and promote interfaith harmony. It further works for the promotion and strengthening of democracy, human rights, women and minority rights. An important segment of our research and activities is taking part in nation building processes. We work at all tiers of the society, from the grassroots to the top level, engaging with communities of all faiths and tiers: parliamentarians, academia, universities, theatre groups, media, civil society organizations, religious/faith-based groups as well as secular groups. We serve various churches of all denominations as well as the larger community.

CSC has a strong network throughout the country. Our bilingual theological journal called *Al-Mushir* (The Counsellor), which I edit, is circulated nationally and to many other countries around the world.

I am also part of a group of 24 individuals known as NLD members (National Lobbying Delegation). We are Christians and Hindus that advocate as a group with government bodies and parliamentarians for positive legislation that will enable minorities

to lead their lives as equal citizens, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan.

Various groups throughout Pakistan and abroad have invited me to speak on interfaith harmony, peace, equal citizenship and minority rights. This work has put me in contact with hundreds of organizations, working to promote peace and harmony. It is inspiring to work with people of all faiths to break barriers of prejudice, to enable people to work for the good of all, and to explore their spirituality as part of the human family – with a vision of love, hope and joy. Pakistan is a country where faith matters. This gives us an opportunity to explore and learn from one another about our deepest faith calling: what it is to be human, to love our neighbor, to affirm each other and in doing so, affirm ourselves.

My life at CJP will always be a 'light' within me, guiding me in ways beyond the knowledge that I gained. The spirituality of the human person, the love and 'humane-ness' generated and permeated in the environment of CJP will always radiate an inner strength – a reminder that working for peace and harmony, across divides, beyond boundaries, does in fact lie within each of us, if we are willing to tread on this journey.

This is the art of giving and receiving – in humility and in love of the other, for the entire creation.



JENNIFER JAG JIVAN // PAKISTAN

MY LIFE AT CJP WILL ALWAYS BE A 'LIGHT' WITHIN ME, GUIDING ME IN WAYS BEYOND THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I GAINED. THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON, THE LOVE AND 'HUMANE-NESS' GENERATED AND PERMEATED IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF CJP WILL ALWAYS RADIATE AN INNER STRENGTH – A REMINDER THAT WORKING FOR PEACE AND HARMONY, ACROSS DIVIDES, BEYOND BOUNDARIES, DOES IN FACT LIE WITHIN EACH OF US, IF WE ARE WILLING TO TREAD ON THIS JOURNEY.



KUMAR ANURAJ JHA // NEPAL

Kumar Anuraj Jha

Nepal // MA 2007

Anuraj was tragically killed in a car accident in Kartoum, Sudan, on November 30, 2017. This reflection was written by his wife (and fellow CJP alumna), Jill Landis Jha.

An idealistic 25 year old, Kumar Anuraj Jha left the engineering field to join Save the Children as a program officer in western Nepal during the Maoist conflict. There, Anuraj met child soldiers and learned about the devastating effects war wreaks on the lives of children. He also learned that, while grassroots and community level work can provide positive support to

children, higher-level policy changes were needed to end the grave violations against children and provide better protection for those most vulnerable to the effects of war.

Seeking answers, Anuraj arrived at CJP in August of 2005, one of two Nepalese students who were part of a cohort of Fulbright scholars, and gained an education that was not only academic in nature, but also practical and personal.

At CJP, Anuraj was thrust into a diverse environment where he learned and debated with classmates from around the world. He happily absorbed the emphasis that CJP put on relationships – forging significant connections with professors, debating about politics in Hindi over steaming rice and lentils,

and studying and going for walks with his future wife. Anuraj took seriously CJP's emphasis on "action, reflection, action," a practice that later drove him to constantly re-evaluate and improve the way he approached and implemented his work. Perhaps most critical were the concepts Anuraj learned in conflict analysis, strategic peacebuilding, negotiation and leadership, all of which became key in driving Anuraj's visionary and strategic approach to his work.

CJP's practicum requirement launched Anuraj into his dream of working for the United Nations; during the last semester of his graduate studies, he secured an internship at the United Nations Department of Political Affairs in New York. This four-month opportunity led to a 10-year career

with the United Nations, where Anuraj worked in Nepal, New York, Sudan and other countries in Africa and the Middle East on issues related to the protection of children affected by armed conflict and the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children during war.

Those who worked with Anuraj witnessed his passion, ability and skill in addressing complex and sensitive issues to promote the protection of children in these contexts. Anuraj's work notebooks provide a glimpse into his commitment to continuous learning. His inquisitive nature, need for answers and belief that anything was possible drove him to deepen his knowledge and – if it meant that children could be spared the effects of armed conflict – create opportunities out of the most impossible situations. Anuraj worked tirelessly to ensure children affected by armed conflict could have a second chance in life, and inspired his colleagues with his mantra, "For the Children, Results."

The UNICEF Representative in Sudan – Anuraj's good friend and confidante – shared at his memorial service in Khartoum: "He was like a 5 year old boy who found a new toy, when issues of significance were achieved. When the 21 children associated with armed groups [in Sudan] were released, you would think his children were released from jail. When it took longer to release four children associated with another armed group, his ire was palpable and their release a few weeks later made him melt. That level of compassion and care was unparalleled."

Brett Burnham

United States / Armenia //
MA 2009

My curiosity to pursue graduate education in the field of peace and justice studies was piqued through involvement in the local Amnesty International chapter at my undergraduate campus. I chose CJP due to its outstanding reputation as a trailblazing program with world-renowned faculty members. I was also interested in studying with colleagues from around the world, especially with Fulbright Scholars.

After graduating from CJP in 2009, I spent two years conducting group facilitation and conflict mediation at a federal political action committee called National Stonewall Democrats in Washington D.C. There I spearheaded nationwide grassroots community organizing efforts to bolster LGBT political rights and healthcare equity. I went on to a two year clinical cancer prevention and control health behavior research fellowship at Georgetown University's Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center, which led me down a winding trail of multidisciplinary graduate education.

After additional master's degrees in the fields of cancer biology, prevention and control, secondary social studies education, and community health education, I earned a doctorate of education in 2017 from Columbia University within the department of health and

behavior studies. In the fall of 2018, I moved outside the US and began a new career as assistant professor of behavioral sciences in public health at the American University of Armenia (AUA) Gerald and Patricia Turpanjian School of Public Health in Yerevan, Armenia.

Over the years, I have taught in settings including clinical and community health education sites, secondary social studies education, undergraduate-level allied health education, and graduate-level health education for teachers. At AUA, I teach behavioral health science courses to both undergraduate and graduate students, and my research interests include bio-behavioral and biopsychosocial community health education that aims to address both cancer and LGBT health disparities in Armenia and beyond.

Much of my research and teaching focuses on improving the lives of marginalized and underserved communities through education, advocacy, community organizing, and policy reform efforts. When reflecting back on my educational journey, I credit my time as a student at CJP as a personally and professionally transformational experience that has laid the foundation for all that I have done subsequently. For example, I believe that peacebuilding is at the heart of health equity and social justice. My degree in conflict transformation is integral to my work as a global health professional: I routinely practice nonviolent communication, group facilitation and mediation, strategic systems thinking, theory application, and international development through a "do no harm" paradigm.



I also learned so much about global health at CJP without even realizing it. I took a strategic peacebuilding class that taught me how to engage stakeholders to transform conflict, organize communities around shared goals, implement an evidence-based program to address conflict, and evaluate the program through appropriate frameworks. Essentially, we do this same work in the field of public health. The crossover between the fields of conflict transformation and public/global health are astounding. There is a clear connection between the two: they go hand-in-hand.

The greatest benefit that I received as a result of my education at CJP is my ability to transform conflict within my own life, especially in practicing action-reflection to transform my own trauma. To facilitate the transformation of trauma in others requires that we are first able to transform our own trauma and model the change that we wish to elicit for others. I still maintain close relationships between many of my professors and colleagues, and attribute these interpersonal relationships and networks as an invaluable asset that the CJP community fosters.



JANINA PRADO // BOLIVIA

Janina Prado

Bolivia // MA 2011

I am a cultural affairs specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Bolivia. In this role, I strategically develop programs that lead to youth development and growth, and promote education and social inclusion throughout Bolivia. I am committed to helping people who have traditionally been marginalized, particularly youth and women, by creating meaningful projects and programs, as well as collaborating with organizations that support the development of their emotional, physical, social,

and intellectual selves to gain a voice and place in society. One example is the “Inspira” or Inspire networking program I created, designed to unite and empower U.S. government exchange alumni to become multipliers of the positive impact of educational exchange programs in Bolivia – providing inspiration and mentorship for future generations of Bolivians.

I grew up as a descendant of Aymaras – an important indigenous ethnic group of Western Bolivia – in the city of La Paz, Bolivia, and was the first person in my family to learn English, to travel throughout the country, and to have a desire to wander and see the world

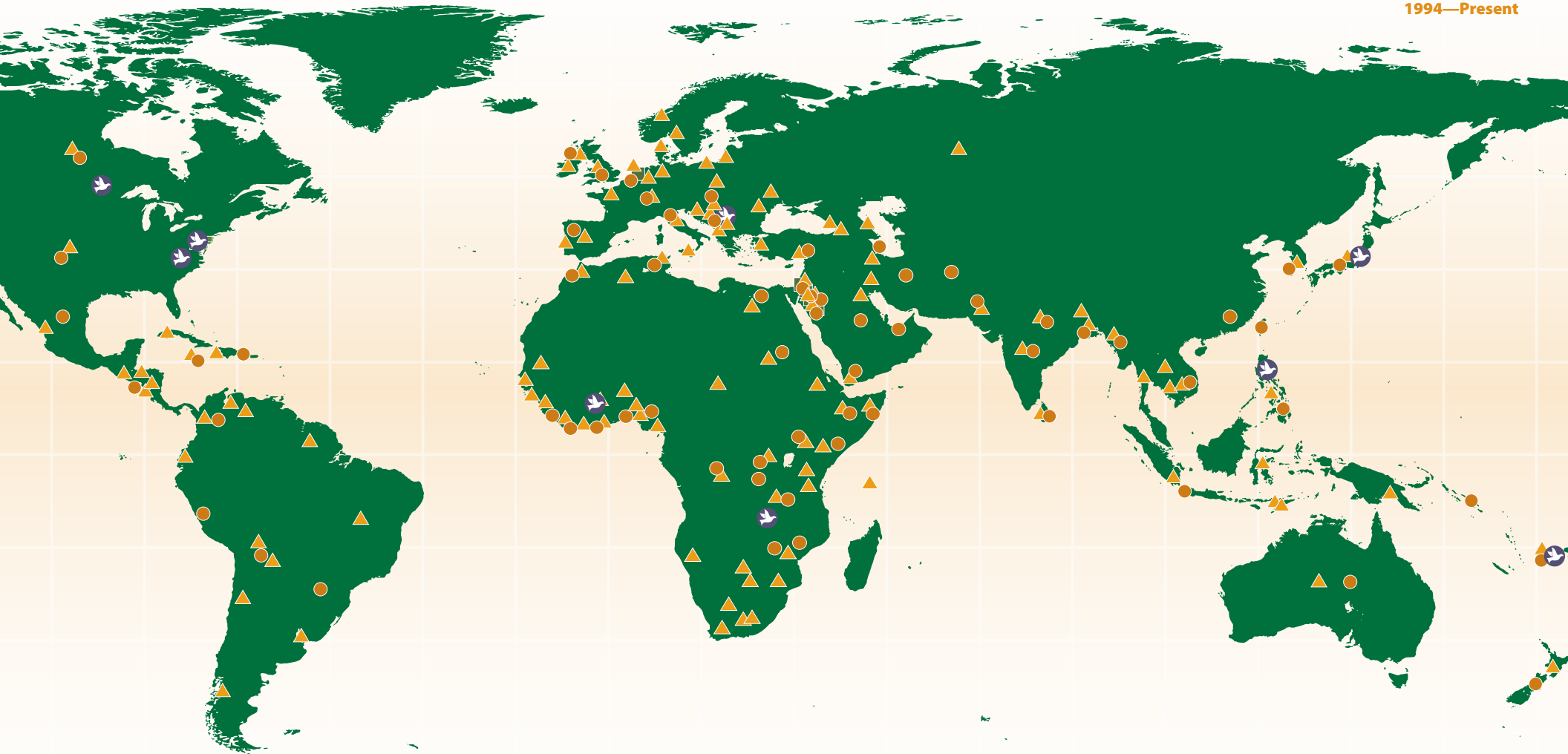
for myself. Because of my academic achievements and community involvements, I was selected in the fall of 2007 as one of the first members of the now famous “U.S. Institute for Latin American Indigenous Student Leaders” or the Winter Institute, as most of the participants refer to the program. This five-week academic seminar and educational travel program gave me a deeper understanding of U.S. society, culture, values, and institutions. Even more than that, it gave me something to strive for: the Fulbright Scholarship, which I was awarded in 2009.

I chose to study conflict transformation and peacebuilding at CJP because

IT WAS A TRULY GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT, WITH PERSPECTIVES FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD. I AM DEEPLY GRATEFUL FOR THAT EXPERIENCE.

I wanted to address social injustices in Bolivia and provide sustainable solutions that could help those in need. CJP offered me the opportunity to meet with people from different backgrounds that are making a difference in the world. During my two years at CJP, I interacted with global leaders, former heads of business, academic and political figures, diplomats and activists. CJP exposed me to the world of international organizations and non-governmental organizations at an unprecedented scale. It was a truly global educational environment, with perspectives from all around the world. I am deeply grateful for that experience.

I would like to continue learning and find opportunities to grow. I want to keep exploring the world and different cultures and remain committed to developing opportunities for underserved youths and women through education in Bolivia. I strongly believe that education is the key to success because it opens doors for people of all backgrounds, and it allows us to understand the world with an open mind.



Global Impact

● **Master's or graduate certificate in conflict transformation:** 638 alumni in 65 countries

▲ **Academic and non-degree training at EMU**

SPI - Summer Peacebuilding Institute: More than 3,300 alumni in 124 countries

STAR - Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience:

More than 5,150 participants from 62 countries

🕊️ **Peacebuilding institutes modeled on EMU's Summer Peacebuilding Institute:**

Located in 9 countries -- Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Ghana, Fiji, Mozambique, Northeast Asia, Philippines, United States, Zambia

darsheel kaur

United States // MA 2017

I came to CJP after a year of strategic and confrontational direct actions and community organizing responding to the police murder of John Crawford III in Beavercreek, Ohio, near where I grew up. No one was held accountable through the criminal legal system; the underlying culture of racism and bias was being structurally ignored; and I was searching for a meaning of justice that was as worth fighting for as the well-being and lives of my people. I focused my MA studies on restorative justice with a critical race lens and psychosocial trauma/resilience/healing. My cohort, representing at least 10 different countries with many cultures, backgrounds, and experiences, brought incredible depth to my time at CJP. Not only were topics and concepts studied through text, discussion, and research, but we were given space to facilitate, lead openings, closings, stretch breaks or energizers, circles to deal with community or social/political issues together.

The classroom was a space to practice many skills and deepen my confidence of process design and facilitation. My time at CJP equipped me with concrete tools, concepts, models, and strategies for collective liberation. It opened up and solidified a stream of work for me to build upon, based on my analysis of collective needs and barriers of the most marginalized communities, including my own. During my first year at CJP, I lost a friend to suicide and Trump was elected into presidency.

My culminating practicum experience with Circles & Ciphers in Chicago was a natural blossoming of energy transformed from fear, deep grief, isolation, and marginalization into creative and artistic expression and flow. It was an experience of transformative community building and healing, ending with a hip-hop-inspired, rhyme-based capstone presentation at CJP.

I am now back in my hometown of Dayton, Ohio, engaging my skills and energies in multiple ways. I have been writing and performing poetry through storytelling, prose, rap, consciousness raising, education, and collective healing. I was recently featured in an event, "Scripted in Black: A Women of Color Reading Series," themed on self-preservation and self-care through mind, soul, body, and spirit. I am also a cultural organizer for the Midwest Culture Lab, a collaborative initiative under the umbrella of the Alliance for Youth Action. By bringing together organizers and creatives to tell the untold stories of young people of color and creatives in the Midwest, this work allows me to combine my passion for arts, hip hop, and creativity with my passion for organizing people and resources towards collective transformation and liberation.

I also develop and facilitate trainings and workshops, most recently around restorative justice and healing justice. Over the last year I developed, coordinated, and implemented "Welcome Belmont," a high school leadership program and initiative focused on the needs of immigrant and refugee students through engaging the broader school and outside community towards



DARSHEEL KAUR // UNITED STATES

building a more welcoming school environment for everyone. It was one of the most challenging years and professional experiences of my life, and I drew upon much of what I learned during my time at CJP. I am grateful for the guidance, encouragement, and relationships as well as the challenging and transformative environment of CJP.

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CONCRETE TOOLS,
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AND STRATEGIES
FOR COLLECTIVE
LIBERATION.**



SHO IGAWA ATIAS // ISRAEL // JAPAN // UNITED STATES

Sho Igawa Atias

Israel // Japan //
United States // MA 2017

I chose CJP for my graduate education because of its grassroots, relationship-oriented approach to creating social change. I still remember, when I visited for the first time, how warm the students, faculty and staff were. Feeling that “people-centeredness” was definitely a deciding factor. CJP provided a space for deep reflection about who we are – not just strengths and weaknesses, but also one’s complex identity. Professors were teaching us that we would function effectively in conflict resolution work only if we knew ourselves deeply. Well, knowing myself deeply meant that I should grapple with my Moroccan-Israeli heritage.

I was born in Tokyo to a Japanese father and an Israeli mother, and grew up most of my life in Miami, Florida. During my time at CJP, I struggled with how my Moroccan-Israeli family is situated in the Israeli society. For my practicum, I spent time with NGOs in Japan and Israel. I learned much more about how severely discriminated Jews of the Middle East and North Africa were in a Eurocentric society. I became more nuanced in what my role might be in transforming Israel / Palestine to be more just. I came to believe my contributions may be in amplifying diverse people’s stories across divisions – so that we see one another. In other words, I aspire to contribute to the

intersection between storytelling and a healthy, cohesive society embracing differences.

After working for a Japanese NGO in Jerusalem, I have recently begun a fellowship called Dorot – a leadership development program for young American Jews working to influence their communities. During the program, I will study Jewish texts from the Muslim world, interview my Moroccan-Israeli relatives to hear their life stories, volunteer at an inclusive community organizing NGO, and hopefully study illustration with an Israeli artist.

The last goal is in service of my mission to portray the diverse life experiences of people in Israel and Palestine through storytelling – specifically in the form of graphic novels. I yearn for this medium to be a powerful form of accessible education for the masses. It is said that with graphic novels, readers learn more and better. Instead of struggling through social studies, young adults could read graphic novels to learn about the diverse experiences of others in their society – with the ultimate goal of humanizing each other.

**CJP PROVIDED A SPACE
FOR DEEP REFLECTION
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AND WEAKNESSES, BUT
ALSO ONE’S COMPLEX
IDENTITY.**

Katrina Poplett

United States // MA 2019

I grew up in the outskirts of Minneapolis, Minnesota. I came to EMU in 2014 with the intent to pursue the peacebuilding and development major (PXD). I had realized my privileged perspective when larger social movements across the United States started changing the political landscape. While I was raised a pacifist, I began interrogating what that meant, especially as a teenager in high school. This led me to activism work and a desire to understand and advocate for equity and opportunities that were not available to people who did not look like me or grow up with the same privileges.

The PXD program at EMU was a perfect fit for me. During my first year, I discovered restorative justice (RJ). I quickly realized my theory of change was deeply rooted in RJ values and practices, which caused me to pursue all kinds of RJ experiences during my undergraduate years. I attended trainings and conferences, and have been able to facilitate RJ processes with the city of Harrisonburg, the city of Minneapolis and different departments on campus at EMU. My motivation for peacebuilding and restorative justice comes from a desire to promote healing and true justice from oppressive and manipulative institutions and organizations.

When CJP announced it was expanding to include an MA in restor-

ative justice, I felt called to pursue it. Johonna Turner's "RJ and Trauma Awareness" class has been particularly transformational. Through exploration of RJ and all it can encompass, I truly feel as though I have "changed the lens" that I see the world through on a day-to-day basis.

I represented CJP at the Notre Dame Student Peace Conference in April 2018, presenting a workshop on racial tensions and restorative justice. While at CJP, I also co-facilitated RJ trainings for undergraduate EMU students. I have learned about the critical role that intersectionality plays in this field, and how to bring myself fully to this work. I think CJP does a wonderful job of encouraging students to interrogate, deconstruct and then reconstruct who they are personally so that when we leave CJP, we know who we are and what we are bringing to our work. This process is long, difficult, ongoing and sometimes painful, but is so critical for the work of conflict transformation and restorative justice. This is a unique part of CJP that should not be overlooked.

After graduation, I hope to actively work with restorative justice in a capacity that enables healing and/or a better option/process – and ultimately, justice. I hope to live restoratively, living into practices that encourage relationships and restoration in whatever community I end up in. I also hope that wherever I end up, I will be able to use RJ as part of my advocacy and activism to help social movements defy the pressures of an increasingly capitalist and unjust society.



KATRINA POPLETT // UNITED STATES



BOUELA LEHBIB BREICA // WESTERN SAHARA

Bouela Lehbib Breica

Western Sahara // MA 2019

I grew up in the refugee camps of Western Sahara. I lived my entire life depending on humanitarian aid in providing the basic needs such as food, shelter and education. It is not the sort of life I wanted and I dreamed of a different life. I became convinced that the miracle that could make a difference in my life and that of my people was the power of education.

I attended a small school in my community run by volunteer teachers and with very limited resources. In a refugee camp, education is a luxury and means little when other basic needs are missing. There were moments when I questioned my future and the importance of education. For eighth grade, I moved to a boarding school in Algeria for an entire year. Away from my family, the idea of dropping out of school was a constant temptation. However, I held on to the smallest glimmer of hope and stayed in school.

At a very young age in Algeria, I had to learn how to survive by myself: wash

my own clothes, take care of myself, adjust to the culture and learn the local dialect. Not hearing from family for a couple of months was incredibly difficult. Yet, when I thought about the future, I felt I was on the right path to fulfill my goals. Nine years later, I managed to graduate with two undergrad degrees: one in translation and one in science of communication and journalism. Although it was hard work, that achievement gave me such a sense of self-pride and self-confidence that I felt nothing could stand in my way.

My journey to seek knowledge went on. In 2015, I got an Erasmus scholar-

I FEEL SO BLESSED TO BE PART OF CJP'S RICH CULTURE AND EMBRACING COMMUNITY.

ship awarded by the European Union to a master's program in interpreting. It was an amazing experience in Spain through which I was exposed to different cultures, learned new language and made friendships with people from all walks of life.

My dream did not stop there. I was like countless students in the world whose dream is to study in the United States. I was sitting in my grandma's tent, sipping tea, when I came across a website advertising the Fulbright scholarship to study in the U.S. I told myself: this is the opportunity of a lifetime. How I got this scholarship was not an easy journey either, but here I am at Eastern Mennonite University, working towards a master's degree in conflict transformation.

Coming to EMU was a turning point in my life. The Center of Justice and Peacebuilding is one of the leading centers worldwide where future leaders and peacebuilders are formed. It is a place that has changed my worldviews, honored my identity and made my voice heard. I feel so blessed to be part of CJP's rich culture and embracing community. Thanks to CJP, I am now a transformative leader and peacebuilder who will go out into the world preaching love, justice and peace in a world torn apart by conflict.

Talibah Aquil

United States // MA 2019

Attending the CJP program has certainly not only contributed to me as an individual and my wholeness, but to my purpose in the world as well. I grew up in a Mennonite church in the Bronx, New York, and that is where my understanding for peace, both in myself and in my community, came to fruition. Both my church, King of Glory Tabernacle, and a very important Christian camp I grew up in, Camp Deer Park, shaped my pursuit of not just living peacefully, but intentionally seeking peace throughout my different journeys and walks of life. Applying to CJP's graduate program in conflict transformation at EMU came as a surprise to me during that time in my career, but not as a surprise to God.

I was finishing my two year Peace Corps Service in Rwanda, when I had a true heart to heart with the Lord. "What is next for me?" "Where do you want me to go?" "What is my purpose in the world?" were questions I daily asked Him. I had served and learned and grown so much in those two years, and I knew I was not returning to America the same. Although the performing arts and musical theatre was what my life had been centered on up to that point, I felt and knew the Lord was calling me to a different level of healing. My time in Rwanda was a catalyst for God to reveal my purpose; and as I searched frantically for graduate programs outside of the US, all that kept appearing as my search result was "Eastern Mennonite University." And after "gently"

debating with God about not attending EMU, I knew "obedience was better than sacrifice" and that God had a plan for my life at CJP.

So here I am, beginning my second year at CJP. Knowing now more than ever that God will never lead me astray in His plans for my life. This program has shaped me and molded me into the peacebuilder and human I aspire to be in the world. Through the program, I discovered the language, skill sets, knowledge and power to speak to the things of the world that were intentionally and unintentionally created to cause division and conflict. I have discovered my passion for trauma healing and awareness, and this spring I will be traveling to Ghana and Kenya for my final research project, where I will use the power of the arts to share, tell the stories and speak to the legacy of historical trauma and historical violence centered on people of color.

It is a true blessing and privilege to say I have felt safe and supported in spaces shaped by my professors and more than anything, I am so grateful to say that CJP feels like HOME. God never makes mistakes, and I am so grateful God chose CJP for my journey.

**I AM SO GRATEFUL TO
SAY THAT CJP FEELS
LIKE HOME**



TALIBAH AQUIL // UNITED STATES







SUPPORT OUR PEACEBUILDERS

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